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RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU  
INFO RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS 8627  
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RUEHDA/AMCONSUL ADANA 2635  
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 6370  
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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT  
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2008

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#### In Today's Papers

##### 33 Nationalists Detained for Weapons, Assassination Plots

All papers give extensive front page coverage to the operations carried out yesterday in three provinces to capture members of an illegal organization code-named "Ergenekon." The operations began with the discovery of army grenades eight months ago in a house in the Umraniye district of Istanbul. Mainstream Sabah reports that the offices of the nationalist associations 'Kuvayi Milliye' and 'Mudafaai Hukuk' were raided during the operations. Retired General Veli Kucuk, journalist Guler Komurcu, ultra-nationalist lawyer Kemal Kerincsiz and retired Colonel Fikri Karadag are among the 33 people taken into custody. Islamist-oriented Yeni Safak notes that the operation was a turning point in the fight against illegal networks.

Sabah and Hurriyet report that the Istanbul chief prosecutor reminded the media that press reports related to the issue have been suspended. Following this decision, no further details about the accusations against the suspects were released. Papers also report that two days ago Istanbul police Chief Celalettin Cerrah met with PM Erdogan in Ankara. They further speculate that after the meeting, Erdogan authorized the operations. Sabah says that the Ergenekon network was linked to a number of big attacks, including the murder of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink, three bomb attacks against Cumhuriyet daily, the murder of an Italian priest in Trabzon and the Danistay killings.

##### PM Erdogan and US Ambassador Wilson Discussed Terror

Sabah reports that PM Erdogan and Ambassador Wilson met late on Monday night to discuss the fight against terror. Reports say the Ambassador requested an appointment from the PM before going to the US for a high-level defense group meeting and that the PM had to cancel an AKP administrative meeting in order to see the Ambassador.

Yesterday, Erdogan told journalists that terror was discussed at the meeting. Ambassador Wilson told the Anatolian News Agency

yesterday that he wanted to hear the Prime Minister's opinion on bilateral issues before going to the US next week.

#### Davos Survey

All papers report that a survey prepared for the Davos World Economic Forum meetings concluded Turks are more pessimistic than Iranians regarding the Muslim-West dialogue, and that 13% of Turks support al Qaeda. Mainstream Hurriyet reports that "according to a global poll conducted before Davos, the Islamic World and the West do not understand each other." Yeni Safak says that PM Erdogan will not attend the Davos World Economic Forum because the summit is taking place in the shadow of crisis as Muslims are not being shown respect. Other papers report that, according to statements made by the PM's office, Erdogan cancelled his plans to attend Davos due to a number of important internal developments and a heavy schedule.

#### EDITORIAL OPINION: Turkish Foreign Policy

##### "The Derailing of Turkish Foreign Policy"

Cengiz Candar commented in business and political daily Referans (1/23): "It was comforting and nice to hear when President Gul declared 2008 as 'the EU year for Turkey.' However, we should look at the deeds following the words. In that regard, Turkish foreign policy, at least so far this year, is far from focused on EU goals. It appears that 2008 is destined to be anything but the EU year. President Gul went to the US, but right after that he rushed to Syria and Egypt. In Syria, he stood side by side with former Lebanese president Lahoud, whom he called 'the Syrian puppet' and who has been linked to the assassination of Hariri. Shortly after that visit, the Presidential Palace was opened for the Sudanese president, who is known as a military dictator and a champion of Islamist Sharia law. He is also accused of genocide. How can Turkey make 2008 a year of the EU under such foreign policy

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preferences? Given the current vision, it is almost impossible to expect any step for democratization and freedom of expression. Evidently Turkish foreign policy has been derailed."

##### "Sharing Intelligence with Israel!"

Hakan Albayrak argued in Islamist oriented Yeni Safak (1/23): "It is very interesting to see that the Turkish leaders, including President Gul, exert every effort at international forums to defend the rights of Palestinian people. Given its power and influence, Turkey should be able to act in a more robust manner on this issue, even at the Annapolis Conference. At the very least, Turkey should cancel the defense cooperation agreement with Israel. Meanwhile, wire services report that Israeli Defense Minister Barak will visit Turkey at the invitation of Turkey's Defense Minister Gonul. Reports say that Barak, who has been called the 'Minister for Attacks,' and Gonul will discuss bilateral cooperation and regional security. I cannot help but ask some questions to the AKP government as well as the Turkish General Staff. Israel represents an evil regime which holds the primary responsibility for the insecurity in this region. What are we going to talk with them about? Defense cooperation with Israel reverberates as something shameful. How long should we bare this shame? There is also talk about sharing intelligence with Israel. What is that supposed to mean? If Israel provides intelligence about the PKK, what are we going to provide in return? Are we going to inform against Hamas or Lebanese Hizbullah? There is no rationale for Turkey to become so involved with Israel."

#### TV Highlights

NTV

#### Domestic News

- Istanbul Mayor Toptan said Istanbul has a huge population and cannot accept any new migrants.

- The bird flu virus was found in Saz village in the Black Sea province of Zonguldak.

- MHP leader Bahceli said the headscarf issue should be solved in parliament.

- The "You-Tube" internet site has been banned since Friday in Turkey by a court in Sivas.

#### International News

- PKK supporters staged protests yesterday in front of the Council of Europe while the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe elected a new Turkish member of the European Court of Human Rights.

- Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad said "life in Gaza has become completely unbearable."

- Kosovo's PM Hashim Thaci meets top EU and NATO officials this week to secure a timetable for the province's independence from Serbia.

WILSON